

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
SSC-01 SNM-05 DEAE-00 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03
TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01
STR-07 CEA-01 JUSE-00 FTC-01 MCT-02 SY-05 IO-13
AGRE-00 /130 W

-----115249 051900Z /44

R 042244Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9360
INFO USSOUTHCOM
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA POUCH
AMEMBASSY CALI POUCH
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN POUCH

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 BOGOTA 7354

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, CO
SUBJECT: POLITICAL SUMMARIES: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. IN THE LULL PRECEDING THE AUGUST 7 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, AMIDST UNCONFIRMED SPECULATION AS TO WHO WOULD BE IN THE CABINET, THE NEW CONGRESS CONTINUED TO ORGANIZE ITSELF AND THE LIBERAL PARTY HELD A MINI-CONVENTION TO ELECT INTERIM OFFICERS. REMARKS BY VISITING DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION CHIEF PETER BENSINGER CALLING FOR "MILITARIZATION" OF COLOMBIA'S MOST DRUG- INFESTED DEPARTMENT BROUGHT INDIGNANT REACTIONS FROM A NUMBER OF COLOMBIAN OFFICIALS AND THE PRESS, UNTIL THE AMBASSADOR CLEARED THE AIR BY INDICATING THAT BENSINGER'S REMARKS WERE PERSONAL AND DID NOT REFLECT USG POLICY. PAST AND FUTURE PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL AGUDELO VILLA
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CONTINUED HIS ATTACKES ON DOMESTIC "MONOPOLIES" AND "EXCESSIVE" INFLUENCE OF MULTI-NTAIONAL CORPORATIONS AND WAS SUED FOR SLANDER BY A LEADING BANKER, JAIME MICHELSEN. THE RATE OF INFLATION DECLINED AND THE BOGOTA INTERNATIONAL FAIR CAME TO AN END, WITH AMERICAN ENTERPRISES REGISTERING EXCELLENT SALES. BOMB EXPLOSION AT RETAIL OUTLETS HIGH-LIGHTED A LEFTIST STRIKE AT UNIROYAL (CROYDON), AUTHORITIES

LAUNCHED AN ANTI-GUERRILLA OFFENSIVE IN THE NORTH, AND THE PRESS CONTINUED TO SPECULATE THAT CUBAN OFFICIALS PROBABLY MURDERED OR KIDNAPPED A CUBAN BASEBALL PLAYER WHO DISAPPEARED AT THE CENTRAL AMERICAN GAMES IN MEDELLIN AND IS BELIEVED TO HAVE TRIED TO DEFECT.

2. POLITICAL SCENE DOMINATED BY PREPARATIONS FOR INAUGURATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT. POLITICAL ACTIVITY TOOK PLACE MOSTLY BEHIND THE SCENES, AS TURBAY MET WITH MOST MAJOR POLITICAL LEADERS IN PREPARATION FOR HIS INAUGURATION AUGUST 7 AND THE APPOINTMENT OF HIS CABINET. SPECULATION CONTINUED AS TO WHO THE NEW MINISTERS WOULD BE, BUT TURBAY IS KEEPING THEIR IDENTITIES CLOSE TO HIS CHEST, EXCEPT FOR FOREIGN MINISTER LIEVANO, WHO TURBAY HAS SAID WILL CONTINUE AS LONG AS LIEVANO WANTS (I.E. AT LEAST UNTIL HIS EXPECTED ELECTION AS UNGA PRESIDENT IN SEPTEMBER). TURBAY HELD WELL PUBLICIZED MEETINGS WITH THE HEADS OF BOTH MAJOR CONSERVATIVE PARTY FACTIONS, FORMER PRESIDENT MISAEL PASTRANA AND ALVARO GOMEZ HURTADO, AND GAVE PUBLIC ASSURANCES THAT BOTH FACTIONS WOULD BE OFFERED POSITIONS IN HIS GOVERNMENT. THE LIBERAL PARTY HELD A MINI-CONVENTION AUGUST 2 TO ACCEPT TURBAY'S RESIGNATION AS NATIONAL DIRECTOR, AND ELECTED TURBAY'S THREE ALTERNATE DIRECTORS, GUSTAVO BALCAZAR MONZON, JOSE MANUEL ARIAS CARRIZOSA AND PAULINA DE CASTRO MONSALVO, AS A TRIUMVIRATE OF DIRECTORS TO RUN THE PARTY UNTIL AN EXTENDED CONVENTION IS CALLED IN NOVEMBER. THE TWO HOUSES OF CONGRESS MADE COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS BUT POST-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POINED THE ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN.

3. REMARKS BY DEA OFFICIAL DRAW COLOMBIAN CRITICISM. REMARKS MADE BY VISITING DEA HEAD PETER BENSINGER ADVOCATING THE "MILITARIZATION" OF COLOMBIA'S NARCOTICS-INFESTED GUAJIRA REGION PROVOKED CONSIDERABLE NEGATIVE COMMENT FROM SOME GOC OFFICIALS AND THE LOCAL MEDIA, ALLEGING IMPROPER US INTERFERENCE (BOGOTA 7201). THE AMBASSADOR SUBSEQUENTLY MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE REMARKS ATTRIBUTED TO BENSINGER WERE UNAUTHORIZED AND STRICTLY PERSONAL AND DID NOT REFLECT OFFICIAL USG POLICY. HIS STATEMENT WAS GIVEN PROMINENT MEDIA PLAY AND SEEMS TO HAVE SMOOTHED THE WATERS.

4. HEAD OF SMALL LIBERAL PARTY GROUP CALLS FOR INCREASED GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN ECONOMY, ATTACKS BANKS. FORMER MINISTER AND ONCE-AND-FUTURE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE HERNANDO AGUDELO VILLA REVIVED HIS LIBERAL FRONT (FL) MOVEMENT WITH ITS SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN MEDELLIN. THE MEETING PROPOSED REFORMS INCLUDING MORE GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN THE ECONOMY, DECENTRALIZATION OF PRIVATE ECONOMIC POWER, AND REDUCED DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN CAPITAL AND MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS. AGUDELO'S DENUNCIATION OF POWERFUL ECONOMIC

INTERESTS, INCLUDING JAIME MICHELSEN'S GRUPO GRANCOLOMBIANO, HAS LED MICHELSEN TO SUE AGUDELO FOR SLANDER. COMMENT: THE LIBERAL FRONT REMAINS ONLY A SMALL MOVEMENT WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY, BUT AGUDELO APPARENTLY HOPES TO KEEP IT ALIVE IN ORDER TO ENHANCE HIS CHANCES FOR THE PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION IN 1982.

5. INFLATION DECLINES IN JULY. ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL GOC FIGURES FOR JULY, THE INFLATION RATE DECLINED SIGNIFICANTLY. THE DECLINE PROBABLY WAS DUE MAINLY TO FAVORABLE WEATHER CONDITIONS WHICH HAVE BOOSTED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION. THE WHITE COLLAR INDEX INCREASED BY ONLY 0.2 PERCENT IN JULY WHILE THE BLUE COLLAR RATE DECLINE BY 0.5 PERCENT. COMMENT: CONSUMER PRICES HAVE RISEN BY 13.1 PERCENT DURING THE FIRST 7 MONTHS OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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1978 FOR WHITE COLLAR EMPLOYEES AND 12.2 PERCENT FOR BLUE COLLAR WORKERS. IF THE GOOD WEATHER CONDITIONS HOLD, FARM PRICES SHOULD DECLINE OR AT LEAST REMAIN STABLE; THUS THE INFLATION RATE FOR THE YEAR AS A WHOLE SHOULD NOT EXCEED 18-20 PERCENT.

6. US EXHIBITORS CONTINUE STRONG SALES AT BOGOTA FAIR. THE XII INTERNATIONAL FAIR OF BOGOTA CLOSED ON JULY 29. EXHIBITORS IN THE US PAVILION REPORTED OFF THE FLOOR SALES OF US DOLLARS 51.2 MILLION. IT IS ESTIMATED THAT OVER ONE MILLION PERSON VISITED THE FAIR BETWEEN JULY 15 AND 30.

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COMPUTERS, PWER TOOLS, ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT, AMC JEEPS,
MOTOR LAUNCHES, AND PLASTICS MACHINERY WERE AMONG THE
BEST SELLING PRODUCTS . (BOGOTA 7197)

7. STRIKE-RELATED VIOLENCE REGISTERED; GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES
ANTI-GUERRILLA OFFENSIVE. BOMBS EXPLODED AT TWO CROYDON
(UNIROYAL) RETAIL OUTLETS THE EVENING OF AUGUST 2, BUT NO
INJURIES WERE REPORTED. THE 5,000 WORKERS OF CROYDON'S
BOGOTA RUBBER FOOTWEAR AND PRODUCTS AND CALI TIRE PLANTS
HAVE BEEN ON STRIKE SINCE JULY 5. THE CROYDON UNION IS
AFFILIATED TO THE COMMUNIST-DOMINATED CSTC (BOGOTA 7089,
PARA 6). SMALL SCALE GUERRILLA ATTACKS CONTINUED IN
COLOMBIA'S NORTHERN DEPARTMENTS. GOVERNORS AND MILITARY AND
POLICE AUTHORITIES MET DURING THE WEEK TO DEVISE METHODS OF
CONTROLLING GUERRILLA ACTIVITY AND AN ANTI-GUERRILLA OFFENSIVE IN
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CORDOBA AND ANTIOQUIA WAS REPORTED. MYSTERY CONTINUES TO
SURROUND THE DISAPPEARANCE OF CUBAN BASEBALL PLAYER PEDRO
JOSE (CHEITO) RODRIGUEZ AT THE RECENT CENTRAL AMERICAN GAMES
IN MEDELLIN. PRESS REPORTS HAVE SUGGESTED HE WAS EITHER
HUSTLED BACK TO CUBA TO PREVENT HIS DEFECTING TO JOIN A PRO-
FESSIONAL TEAM IN THE US, OR, MORE LIKELY, WAS KILLED DURING
A SCUFFLE WITH CUBAN OFFIIALS TRYING TO PREVENT HIS DEFECTION.
AN ARTICLE IN BOGOTA'S EL TIEMPO, BASED ON A TABULATION OF
PRESS ARTICLES AROUND THE COUNTRY, INDICATED THAT 1,093 VIOLENT
CRIMES AGAINST INDIVIDUALS WERE REPORTED FOR THE PERIOD FEBRUARY
6-MARCH 6, 1978.
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